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Ohio State University
Journalism Series
No. 15

The Beginnings of Ohio Journalism

Newspapers of the Territorial Period, 1793-1803

By
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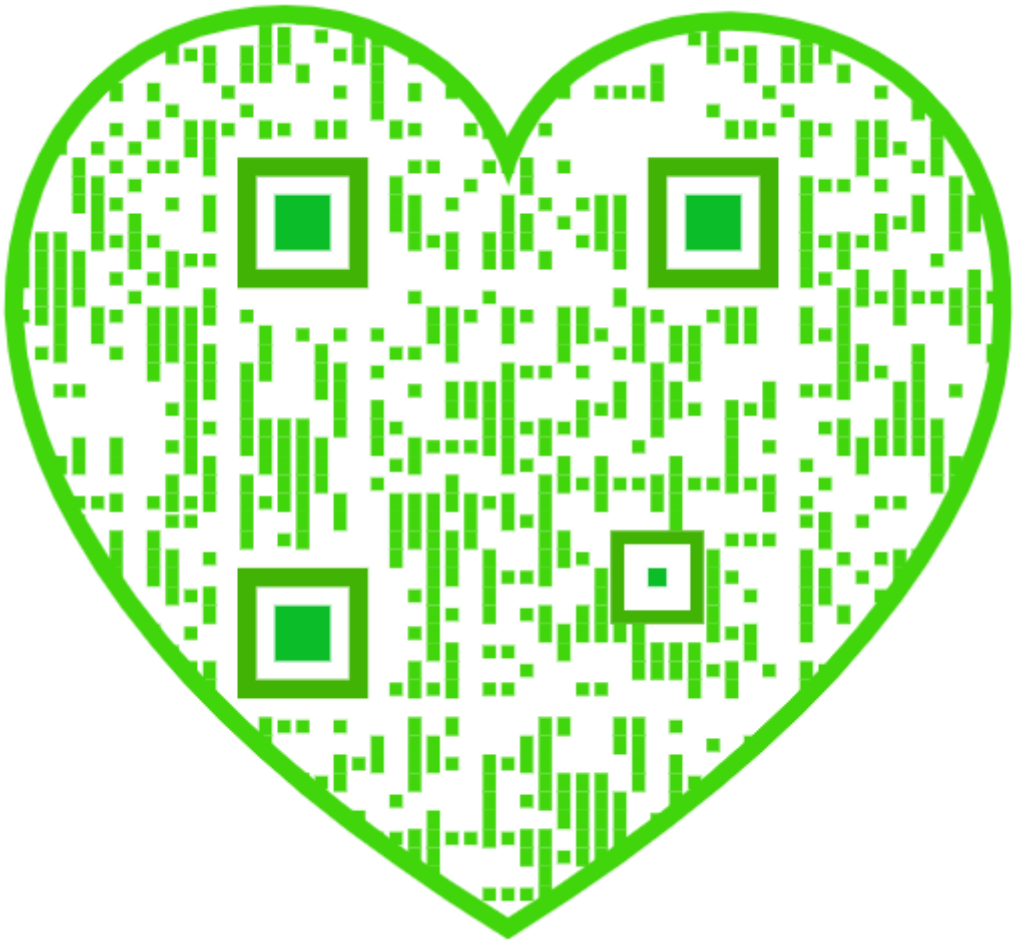
JOURNALISM SERIES, No. 14
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, 1942



New material concerning the early press of Ohio is presented in this summary by Jesse J. Currier, of Bowling Green State University. It is a revised condensation of his M.A. thesis in journalism at Ohio State University, where the original is on file.—Ed.

I

Westward Movement of the Press

In journalism as in many other fields, Ohio is a national leader. Its more than 500 newspapers rank it near the top, in numbers and otherwise, in the American press. Anyone interested in Ohio's modern newspapers will find equal interest in the birth of the state's newspaper press nearly a century and a half ago when Ohio itself was largely wilderness.

Ohio's early newspaper history begins in the east, starting with the venturesome colonial printers who packed up their presses and types and joined the westward movement.

The pioneer newspaper press was ever near the vanguard of westward expansion. Its history parallels that of national growth and population movement, for as each wave of emigration pushed out from the old coastal centers of population the pioneer printer-journalist, with his old hand-press and fonts of type, was not far behind.

For nearly a century journalism in America was confined to the colonial seaboard. The first editor to penetrate the Appalachian wilderness and establish a paper west of the mountains was John Scull, a young Quaker just turned twenty-one, who went to Pittsburgh from eastern Pennsylvania and began there in 1786 the *Pittsburgh Gazette*.[1]

Even though Pittsburgh was the oldest community west of the mountains it was but a struggling frontier outpost. The young editor had to circulate his weekly sheet over a wide section of countryside to reach his scattered subscribers. To help eke out a precarious living he served as the village postmaster. His Ramage press was so small that eight impressions were required to produce one copy of the four-page 14 by 24 inch paper.

[1] For the history of this pioneer western newspaper see J. Cutler Andrews, *Pittsburgh's Post-Gazette*.

The second western newspaper was established in Kentucky and was the result not so much of editorial aggressiveness as of public demand. By the time the Federal Constitution was adopted the people there were clamoring for statehood. Several conventions were held at Danville, but leaders recognized the need of a press to aid in solidifying statehood sentiment. So John Bradford, a native of Virginia and a practical printer, volunteered to undertake newspaper publication if the legislature would back him. It agreed gladly, and in 1786 about the time the *Pittsburgh Gazette* was making its appearance, Bradford was granted a lot in Lexington as a site for his shop.

Even with public support and official backing it was more than a year before Bradford could assemble his equipment and start publication. Some of his early trials are illustrative of those experienced by all the western publishers. His press and materials were long in coming, and were all but destroyed during the hazardous journey from the east. The press and types, purchased in Philadelphia, were taken overland to Pittsburgh, and then by flatboat down the Ohio to Limestone (now Maysville). From there they were transported by water to eastern Kentucky, and then by pack to Lexington. Finally on August 11, 1787, appeared the first issue of the *Kentucke Gazette*, a single sheet 10 by 19 inches.[2]

The harassed publisher, in the first number, made apologies for his initial effort. He inserted the following notice to the public:

> My customers will excuse this, my first publication, as I am much hurried to get an impression by the time appointed. A great part of the types fell into pi in the carriage of them from Limestone to this office, and my partner, which is the only assistant I have, through an indisposition of the body, has been incapable of rendering the smallest assistance for ten days past.

By the 1790's the press was converging on the future Ohio country from three directions. At Pittsburgh John Scull for nine years had had no local competition.

[2] For the life of Bradford and early history of *The Kentucke Gazette* see William Henry Perrin, "The Pioneer Press of Kentucky," No. 3 in the Filson Club Publications.

In the south John Bradford also enjoyed a monopoly in the Kentucky capital. And from the southeast another journalistic frontier was being pushed toward the region northwest of the Ohio. This was led by Nathaniel Willis, first printer in the region now West Virginia, and later a leading figure in the first chapter of Ohio's newspaper history.

The fan-shaped pattern of westward press expansion was halted temporarily at the Ohio, due to the turmoil which existed in the region northwest of that river. Held precariously in the face of British defiance and Indian reprisal, the Northwest was a problem with which the young government, in the throes of post-war reconstruction and Constitution-making, could not cope at once. It was not until seven years after the *Gazettes* in Pittsburgh and Lexington were founded that the first printer braved the threat of Indian violence, and established the first newspaper north of the Ohio, at Cincinnati.

New Scene of Press Expansion

The passage of the Ordinance of 1787 set the stage for the phenomenal development of the Northwest Territory, and opened the way for the swarm of emigrants who had been casting covetous eyes upon this fertile land beyond the Ohio. Among these pioneers were the frontier printers who had reached the rim of the wilderness and were ready to cross over with the first contingents into the new country.

Following the close of the Revolutionary war the exploitation of this fertile region was delayed because, among other reasons, several eastern states had conflicting claims to the Northwest which Congress was unable to arbitrate successfully. By 1786 the last of these land-claiming states came to terms with the national government, which was then in a position to establish a government for the region and to sell lands.

Ohio's first permanent settlement in 1788 followed closely the passage of the Ordinance. It was five years later, in 1793, that the first newspaper was established in Cincinnati. This paper was the *Centinel of the North-Western Territory.*

Second of the six Ohio papers of the pre-state period was the successor of the *Centinel—Freeman's Journal,* also published at Cincinnati. The next, likewise at Cincinnati, was *The Western Spy, and Hamilton Gazette.* This was started in 1799 at the time Freeman moved his weekly from Cincinnati to the new settlement at Chillicothe. The Territory's fourth newspaper was *Freeman's Journal and Chillicothe Advertiser,* founded at Chillicothe early in 1800. The fifth paper was a continuation under a new name and new ownership of Freeman's Chillicothe paper and was *The Scioto Gazette.*

The first permanent settlement in the state was, strangely enough, the last of the early Ohio communities to be supplied with a newspaper. It was 1801 before the sixth and last of these Territorial papers, *The Ohio Gazette, and the Territorial and Virginia Herald,* was founded in Marietta.[3]

Fifteen years after the Ohio country had been opened to settlement the population had mounted so steadily that the quota of 5000 free adult males was reached, and by 1802 Ohio was seeking admission as the first state to be carved from the Territory. Contributing largely to this rapid development and to the marshalling of statehood sentiment were the six Ohio territorial newspapers, among these chiefly *The Scioto Gazette* at Chillicothe, the seat of the territorial government.

Problems of the Frontier

Trials that beset the colonial printer were multiplied many-fold for the early publisher in the west. Removed as he was from the eastern bases of supply, his transportation problem in bringing his initial equipment to the frontier was one that required pioneer ingenuity, perseverance, and considerable money.

Communication from western Pennsylvania to the east was largely confined to the road cut in 1785 be-

[3] The spread of the early Ohio press was northward from these beginnings along the state's southern borders. Not until 1818 did the first press reach Cleveland with the second, or northern, stream of migration.

tween Philadelphia and the forks of the Ohio, three hundred miles of treacherous trail over which lumbered the slow Conestoga wagons. Travel was halted by high waters and adverse weather, and other dangers along the route were numerous. Delivery was uncertain and the rate on freight was high.

The real difficulties of travel began at Pittsburgh, embarkation point for the last stage of the journey downstream by flatboat, or by pack over trails constantly menaced by Indians. If the printer was fortunate enough to get his equipment through to its destination intact, he was then confronted with the constant problem of maintaining his establishment by keeping it in repair and stocked with supplies. This situation accounted for the frequent changes in page size, varying paper quality, and irregular publication, which characterized most of the frontier weeklies.

Presses in the shops of these early papers were of the small flat-bed type, made of wood, little different from the English presses of two centuries earlier. They were heavy and clumsy, and to "pull" them was a fatiguing job for a strong man, one that was too strenuous for an apprentice. The maximum production from these outfits was seldom more than fifty to seventy-five sheets an hour. Most of the presses and types first used in Ohio were old ones cast off by more prosperous eastern establishments. Due both to the transportation problem, and to the fact that these first editors operated on such a slender budget, many fonts of type were used until literally worn out.[4]

Printing ink was not produced commercially in America during the earliest years. The backwoods printer had ink formulas and often attempted to tide over his supply until the arrival of orders from the east with concoctions of his own brewing. These generally consisted of imported powders mixed with a liquid medium made from oak-galls and bark. Inking

[4] It was 1820 before a type foundry was established in the trans-Allegheny region. This was the Cincinnati Type Foundry, operated by John P. Foote and Oliver Wells. (W. H. Venable, *Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley*, p. 43). By 1838 presses, too, were manufactured in Ohio. (Caleb Atwater, *A History of the State of Ohio*, p. 321.)

was done by hand, usually by the apprentice. Many an early printer-editor started in the profession as an ink dauber, spreading ink over the type with an ink ball made of wool and covered with dog-skin or buck-skin.

Paper was a precious commodity, especially to the printer in the Northwest, for there were no paper mills in the region until some years after Ohio became a state.[5] Paper was a costly product to manufacture, being made of clean cotton and linen rags of which there never was an adequate supply. During periods of drouth the streams would not turn the mills, and supplies would become exhausted over a large area.

The first paper mill west of the Alleghenies was started at Royal Spring (Georgetown), Ky., in 1793, the same year the *Centinel* was established in Cincinnati. Knowledge of this western source of supply doubtless encouraged the publisher attempting a start in the new Territory. The first paper was produced in March, 1793. The second mill in the west was built at Redstone Old Fort (Brownsville), Pa., in 1796.

The Ohio papers depended for their paper supply upon these two mills for many years. Often because of shortages of rags or during periods of adverse weather, the two mills could not keep the Ohio presses running. Long and difficult transportation added to the supply problem. The editor of the *Scioto Gazette* explained such a situation in the following notice to his subscribers:

> By reason of the Menongehalia river not having been navigable for some time past, we have been disappointed in receiving a supply of paper from Red-Stone, which was contracted for and to have been delivered at the mouth of Scioto last month; in order to obtain a supply we sent to the mills at George Town, Kentucky, but in this effort we were also disappointed, there not

[5] First paper making in Ohio was done in the Miami Valley some time after the War of 1812. Venable (*op. cit.*, p. 43) says it was in 1820; Thwaites dates the beginning of this mill six years earlier (Reuben Gold Thwaites, *The Ohio Valley Press Before the War of 1812*, p. 45). One writer says that an old German paper maker, one Waldsmith, started a paper mill in the Miami Valley in 1803 (Henry A. Ford, *History of Cincinnati*, p. 285). It is not probable that paper was made there then in quantity, if at all, as all the Territorial papers make numerous references to out-of-state sources of paper supply.

being a ream to be had, we have therefore been under the necessity of sending by land to Red-Stone, at a very heavy expense, from whence we shall be furnished in two weeks, our readers will therefore excuse our issuing half a sheet, during that period. From the circumstance of the high price at which paper now comes at, the Editor earnestly calls on those indebted, (if they wish a press supported in Chillicothe) to come forward and make payment.[6]

Lack of regular mail facilities when the Northwest was opened up and frequent breakdown of the system later established were other trials of the early Ohio publisher. Earliest mail routes to the Northwest from the seaboard were the two established in 1792 from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh and from Richmond over the Wilderness Trail to Danville, Ky. From each terminal mail was sent into the Territory by military couriers or by private travelers.

Necessity of communication with General Wayne's army made a more reliable arrangement necessary. The dangerous southern route was finally abandoned and mail was dispatched to Pittsburgh, then down the Ohio to Fort Washington (Cincinnati). The schedule called for seven days from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati, and thirteen days for the return trip. This service was begun in 1794.

In 1798 the water route was discontinued in favor of the one over "Mr. Zane's Trace."[7] After the signing of the truce at Greenville in 1795, the danger from Indian attack on the overland route had about vanished. According to the schedule, a rider left Pittsburgh every Friday at 2 p. m., and arrived at Zane's Station (Zanesville) the following Monday morning. Another rider left Zanesville Tuesday morning, arriving in Limestone, by way of "Chillicotha," Friday. There was a branch route to Marietta. By 1805 there were two mails weekly from Pittsburgh west.[8]

But even under the post-rider system delivery was

[6] *Scioto Gazette*, Nov. 13, 1802.

[7] Zane's Trace was laid out in 1797 from Wheeling to Zanesville, Lancaster, and Chillicothe, and on to the Ohio river opposite Limestone, Ky.

[8] Beverley W. Bond in his *The Civilization of the Old Northwest*, traces the development of mail distribution in the Territory.

haphazard and delays were frequent. This condition was particularly trying to the editors of the *Centinel* and *Kentucke Gazette,* who depended upon the post for practically all the matter they printed.

Considering their handicaps, it is surprising that publication of the Territorial papers was maintained with any degree of regularity. There were, considering these conditions, surprisingly few lengthy interruptions. This in itself is a commentary on the resourcefulness and pertinacity of the pioneer publishers.

Common Characteristics

The most noticeable characteristic of the content of the pioneer papers is the comparative lack of local news. In the light of the modern concept of local news coverage, the early editor might be accused of practically ignoring the local scene. It is to advertisements instead of local news columns that the historian must often turn for local color. They were a mirror to social conditions on the frontier and often, in a crowded paper, served a double purpose.

General news was chiefly foreign and eastern "intelligence"—reprinted articles from foreign and seaboard papers which were forwarded to the west by mail. This news, of course, was old when it reached the west, and failure of the mails to bring exchanges until three or four weeks late often made foreign news three to five months old when it appeared in the territorial papers. News from the coast, under the most favorable mail conditions, might arrive in less than two weeks, although it was frequently a month or two old before the western editor received it.

While this news was old in relation to the events it reported, it was new to the pioneers, who eagerly sought information about the world beyond their isolated frontier. Cut off as they were from their former homes in the east or south, and having had such recent ties with England and the Continent, it is easy to see why they wanted "foreign intelligence." If there was not room to print both, they were willing to get their local news by word-of-mouth, and let the newspaper,

their only link with the outside world, concentrate on news that otherwise would be denied them.

European news published in these papers during the pre-state period dealt almost exclusively with the progress of the Napoleonic wars which, during this period, involved practically the whole of Europe. War dispatches from the Baltic to Egypt—events of a half year before—were given Page One prominence week after week.

News from the eastern states was mainly political and governmental. There was great interest in the west in the new government and in the Constitution. The independent frontiersman was a little wary of growing federal power, and he wanted to keep in close touch with the development of this government which soon would have to rule on the new Territory's budding statehood ambitions.

Local news consisted almost wholly at first of Indian activities or unusual occurrences. By 1800, as the possibility of statehood loomed, local columns began to reflect the activity aimed at this goal. At the same time the forming of political lines in the Northwest brought local politics into prominence in news columns.

Even after the political leanings of the papers became apparent the editors did not close their pages to the opposition. It remained for editors of a somewhat later period to express extreme partisanship and hurl vituperation at the opposition. The statehood debate, particularly, called forth a whirlwind of long-winded partisan communications which were published more or less indiscriminately, especially in the *Scioto Gazette*.

There were few counterparts of the modern editorial in any of these papers. The editorial had its birth in America about the time the Territory was founded. Toward the close of Washington's second administration the rise of politics gave an impetus to the editorial. The place of the editorial in the first papers in the Northwest usually was filled by long anonymous essays appearing over such pseudonyms as "Vindex," "Farmer," "Populus," etc. No doubt the editor himself

took this means to express his own views on occasion, or was the inspiration for contributions of his friends.

While the content of these papers was rather "heavy," in the light of today, the lighter side was not altogether neglected. Like the eastern papers, those in the west had their "Poets' Corner." The verses were either selected from the stock kept on hand by the editor or were a local product. The latter efforts, often ponderous and dreary, seemed more popular with readers.

Letters to the editor appeared from the first. The second issue of the *Centinel* carried such a communication from a subscriber. But not until statehood neared did they become numerous or liveliest.

Advertisements in the territorial papers make lively reading today, and are of real historical value. They were of wide variety and were highly personalized. The editor threw his columns open to anybody who could pay for the space, and he offered no restrictions on the character of advertising copy.

The types of advertisements in these early Ohio papers varied with the community and each paper by its advertising reflected local conditions and community individuality. The advertising columns as a whole present a record of the cultural and economic growth of the budding state.

Physically, these pre-state papers bore little resemblance to a modern newspaper. In size alone they were something like the tabloids of today, for they were very small. All were limited to four pages. Strikingly absent were large headline types and illustrations.

Some of these western editors gave their pages more eye appeal, however, than was possessed by some of the eastern sheets, or even of somewhat later papers. Material as a rule was not crowded; escape from monotony was attempted by the use of a variety of type faces, and the arrangement of matter in the paper was orderly and consistent. Different kinds of news were arranged under appropriate headings, which makes consultation of files of these papers comparatively easy.

What circulations these western papers attained seems not to have been recorded, but knowing the

limits of population and the restricted circulation area it is apparent that they were very small. Three years after the close of this period, in 1806, the *Western World* in Frankfort, Ky., due to its sensational exposé of the Aaron Burr plot, attained a circulation of 1200 four months after it was started. This was regarded as phenomenal.[9]

Few of the pioneer editor-publishers made much money, but they did not come west with the thought of becoming wealthy. Like the people they served they were essentially pioneers. In this, as in many other respects, they shared common qualities. While some of them succeeded in making a modest living from the much-sought-after official printing, none of them chose to break journalistic ground in Ohio for purely personal aims.

In general, the men who started these first Ohio papers were venturesome and had great faith in the future of the west. They all brought their models from the east but each gave his miniature sheet a distinctive western flavor, and made it the champion of the Northwest Territory and its people, with whom he had cast his lot.

[9] Thwaites, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

II

The Centinel of the Northwestern Territory

Nine years after the first permanent settlement in Ohio had been started at Marietta, the first newspaper was established in the region north and west of the Ohio river. This now-famous weekly news sheet, *The Centinel of the North-Western Territory,* was brought out in 1793 in the newly-founded and unpromising river town of Cincinnati. This settlement was to become the home of the first three territorial papers.

Cincinnati was then a straggling military outpost with a population of about two hundred. The little band of settlers clung to their cabins on the north bank of the river in spite of the constant menace of the Miami Valley tribes who were making a last desperate stand to stave off the inevitable northward push of the frontier.

Cincinnati was not the first settlement in southwestern Ohio, but it outgrew its predecessors because of its selection as a military post and as the first territorial capital. The site for the town was part of a tract secured for speculation by John Cleves Symmes, a member of the Continental Congress from New Jersey.

First settlements in the Symmes Purchase were at Columbia, now a part of Cincinnati, and at North Bend, in 1788. Later in the same year Cincinnati, first called Losantiville, was laid out, and in the fall of 1789 the government established Ft. Washington there as a protection for the struggling communities against Indian attack. St. Clair, the territorial governor, then moved there, made it the territorial capital, and changed the name to Cincinnati, in honor of the society of Revolutionary War officers of which he was president.

Early Cincinnati was a rough and squalid settlement, a dreary site for even a frontier newspaper. It presented many of the worst features of a frontier

town and had few, if any, of the better class of settlers who had come to Marietta, and to nearby Columbia and North Bend. The cabins were poor and the inhabitants migratory. Severity of the Indian attacks made the town tenable for only the hardiest frontiersmen.

The settlement was degraded by the presence of many soldiers. In 1790 the militia assembled at Ft. Washington to go against the Indians in the Maumee Valley. Cincinnati was overrun with the motley contingent of fifteen hundred untrained and disorderly militiamen that made up General Harmar's army. The following year, after the defeat of Harmar, St. Clair himself assembled three thousand troops. These, too, were drunken and unruly.

To this setting—perhaps on the wave of a temporary boom which accompanied the military concentrations—came William Maxwell, founder of the *Centinel*. Peace with the Indians in 1795 brought an increase in population which continued through the years. But never during the life of the *Centinel* did the population of Cincinnati number more than about five hundred.

Maxwell, The Publisher

Little is known of the early life of Ohio's first printer. He was the son of William Maxwell, a Scotch immigrant who settled in New York or New Jersey. The son was born in New York, it is thought, about 1755. Judging by his writings and from records of his public life, it seems likely that he received a fair education for his time. Where he learned the printer's trade is not known, but he must have been an apprentice in the east, for he stated in the first issue of the *Centinel* that he came west to establish a newspaper.

It is thought that Maxwell went west in 1792, for by the following year he had established himself, temporarily at least, in Lexington, Ky.[1] He no doubt entered the Kentucky capital with the thought of starting a paper there, but he found John Bradford well established as publisher of the state-sponsored *Kentucke*

[1]There is disagreement over the date of Maxwell's emigration. His granddaughter said he went west in 1788, but this cannot be substantiated by evidence. Maxwell's first Kentucky imprint appeared with 1793 as the copyright date.

Gazette. Maxwell may well have realized the futility of trying to compete with this influential man of some means who had already captured the lucrative official printing business. While looking for a suitable field for his newspaper activity Maxwell set up his press in Lexington and published a few minor controversial works there, one dated 1793.

Since 1788, notices about new settlements being formed on Judge Symmes' grant on the north side of the Ohio had appeared in the *Kentucky Gazette,* and it may well be that Maxwell was inspired by this news to try his luck in the new territory. Just when Maxwell arrived in the Cincinnati settlement is not certain. To be sure little time was required to transport his small press and meager equipment, or set it up for operation. At any rate within ten months after his book had appeared in Lexington, Maxwell had entered his new field, established his shop, and on November 9, 1793, he brought forth Vol. 1, No. 1 of *The Centinel of the North-Western Territory.*[2]

Aside from newspaper publishing, Maxwell conducted a general printing establishment and holds the distinction of producing the first book published in the northwest. In 1795 Governor St. Clair and the territorial judges revised the laws of the Territory and established a complete legal system by adopting statutes of the original states. These were printed by Maxwell in 1796 in a book known as "Maxwell's Code."[3] The laws previously had been printed in Philadelphia because there was no printing establishment in the Northwest Territory.

Mrs. Maxwell was her husband's assistant in the printing shop, and did the binding for Maxwell's Code. It is strange that while she helped produce Ohio's first bound published work, she herself was illiterate. She was a typical pioneer heroine. Born Nancy Robins in Virginia, she grew up near Wheeling, where her father

[2] One copy of Vol. 1, No. 1, of this historic paper is known to exist. It is in the newspaper collection of the Ohio Archaeological & Historical Society library, Columbus.

[3] The book, of 225 pages, is titled *Laws of the Territory of the United States, Northwest of the Ohio,* and 200 copies were printed on order of the Territorial legislature.

was scalped by Indians. With her mother and neighbors she made a miraculous escape to Ft. Henry and was sheltered there during the siege of that famous fort.

Mrs. Maxwell was a dexterous worker and assisted Maxwell in the printing of the *Centinel.* There were eight children in the Maxwell family. Mrs. Maxwell survived her husband many years, dying in 1868 in Illinois at the age of 108.

Like most early publishers, Maxwell was a man of prominence in his community. His newspaper publishing was a stepping stone to other forms of public service. In 1796 he sold the *Centinel,* shortly after accepting appointment as Cincinnati's second postmaster. During post-*Centinel* years he was active in organization of the state militia, was elected to the House of Representatives of the first Ohio Assembly, and was an associate judge of Greene County and later sheriff of that county.

William Maxwell died in 1809, a man some fifty years old. He was buried on his farm in Greene County, to which he had moved from Cincinnati in 1799. Exact location of this grave has been the object of considerable search and controversy.[4]

The Centinel Plant

Maxwell's original printing office was located in a log cabin at Front and Sycamore Streets. His press, the first in Ohio, was a wooden Ramage press. During the early months of *Centinel* publication Mrs. Maxwell was her husband's only assistant, but as Maxwell's book publishing increased, he was forced to take on an apprentice.

[4] Sometime before 1904 Maxwell's grave was purportedly located at the edge of a woods on an eminence overlooking the Little Miami valley, and was marked by a plain slab of native stone. More recently (1938) Harvey Clark, of the Grene County Historical Society, Roy G. Fitzgerald, Montgomery County Historical Society, and William M. Pettit, state secretary, Ohio S.A.R., have claimed relocation of the grave in a "hog lot" on the farm of J. Dan Steele's heirs in Beaver Creek Twp., Greene County, as reported to the Ohio Historical and Philosophical Society library, Cincinnati, in 1939. The Society has a photograph of the alleged site.

When publication of the *Centinel* was begun there was no postal service in the Territory, and in a short time Maxwell organized his own post system and advertised for a post boy. From the first the *Centinel* circulated in the settlements surrounding Cincinnati. In the initial issue appeared the names of agents who would receive subscriptions in Columbia, North Bend, Colerain, and Newport.

Maxwell purchased paper from the Kentucky mill and suffered paper inconveniences common to the time. As the 1794 winter approached the publisher pleaded with subscribers to pay for subscriptions so that he could lay in his winter's paper supply. In December the *Centinel* appeared on a dark gray paper filled with purple threads, for which the editor made the following apology:

> Being disappointed in getting of paper according to expectation, has obliged us to Print on so bad eqallity.
>
> We hope our subscribers will consider the great inconvenience that we labour under in procuring paper at so far a distance from where it is manufactured.[5]

As a business man, Maxwell was rather casual, and did not let business office worries bear heavily upon him. In the first issue of the *Centinel,* Maxwell had to admit the loss of his subscription list and requested those entitled to the paper to come to the office and claim their copies. The notice read:

> Subscribers to this Paper, will please to call at the office for it, as there has been a subscription-paper mislaid, and the names of a number of subscribers not yet known to the Printer.

At another time the editor stated that the last portion of a continued news article had been "unfortunately mislaid or taken out of the office, which puts it out of our power to give, the continuation of it."[6] He requested those purchasing copies of the territorial Laws to come provided with the necessary change (86c) "as he [the editor] is determined on the present occasion to keep no books."[7]

[5] *Centinel,* Dec. 20, 1794.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.,* March 11, 1796.

Many misconceptions about the *Centinel*, both as to physical characteristics and content, have been widely quoted from early works whose authors must never have examined many issues of the paper.[8] The original size of the sheet was 9⅜ by 12 inches, only slightly larger than a sheet of typing paper. There were four pages, with three columns to the page, separated by rules.

As demands for space increased, especially for the growing advertising business, Maxwell twice increased the page size, first lengthening the paper 3½ inches, and later increasing to 10½ by 16½ inches.

The *Centinel* was, for its day, a well printed paper. The inking and impression were good and the paper was of good quality. Existing copies are well preserved.

The content of the first issue, since it was the first paper in the northwest, deserves some mention. This issue was fairly typical of succeeding early *Centinel* issues. In the left hand column of page one appeared Maxwell's notice to the public, and it reveals much of the publisher's plans, ambitions, and publishing philosophy. Maxwell confessed in this statement his faith in the new country, his willingness to be content with small gains at the beginning, and his desire to offer a public service.

The remainder of the first page was given over to a short story "The Monk," by Sterne, which was continued on page two. On the rest of the second page was "Foreign Intelligence," which carried over to page three. On this page also was the local news—about a column devoted to an Indian attack. The last half-column of page three contained a poem, an anecdote, and the announcement of the loss of the subscription list. Column one of the last page was given over to a long poem, "In imitation of Watt's Indian Philosopher." Column two carried a communication from "Manlius,"

[8] William T. Coggeshall (*The Newspaper Record*, 1865) seems to have been the originator of many of these misconceptions. Until comparatively recent years copies of the *Centinel* were extremely rare. Today there exists in Ohio libraries practically a complete file of the paper.

which argued for equality of taxation in the Territory, and in the third column appeared the only advertising in the issue—two 3-inch advertisements, one for cotton and woolen goods, and the other offering $4 reward for return of a lost pocketbook.

News in the Centinel

Maxwell named his paper appropriately. Ft. Washington stood guard over the southern gateway to the new territory, a sentinel to warn of Indian attack. Maxwell used his news columns to report on this ever-present danger. The column-long local story in the first issue of the *Centinel* (one of the longer local news stories) reported an Indian attack on General Wayne's provision wagon train by a band of Little Turtle's braves near Ft. St. Clair, in which fifteen officers and men were killed. This has been described as an important historical reference.

For months before Wayne's victory, reports of Indian depredations constituted practically the whole news. The citizens themselves finally attempted extermination measures. In 10-point type, under the heading "Public Notice," appeared an announcement signed by a citizen's committee which explained that "for every scalp having the right ear appended, for the first ten Indians who shall be killed within the time limits aforesaid . . . be paid the sum of *one hundred and thirty-six dollars;* . . ." Only $117 each was offered for the second ten scalps. This notice was repeated in a number of issues.[9]

Congratulations to the army upon the defeat of the Indians at Fallen Timbers in August, 1794, appeared in the October 18 issue, but the feeling was that "those yellow savages are not likely to come to a treaty." As the treaty neared, the paper reflected more hope, and finally in September, nearly two months after the treaty was executed, the settlement was reassured by the *Centinel's* publication of St. Clair's official proclamation announcing the peace, and stating that from henceforth all persons could travel in peace.[10]

The news in the *Centinel* from the east and abroad

[9] *Centinel*, May 17, 1794, and following issues.
[10] *Ibid.*, Sept. 5, 1795.

followed the usual pattern—military news from abroad and governmental proclamations and reports on internal conditions reprinted from the eastern papers.

Centinel Editorials

In the rare instances in which Maxwell offered readers his opinion, he expressed himself well. But after adopting for the *Centinel* the motto,"Open to all parties —but influenced by none," he must have felt obligated to permit his readers unlimited opportunity to form their own opinions. Anonymous contributions served as editorials. "Manlius," who had written for the first issue, was soon answered by "Plebius," who came to the defense of the territorial government in the face of the former's criticism. Others were "encouraged by the noble Motto, that adorns the front of your Paper," and kept the editor well supplied with opinion.

In one of his few instances of undisguised writing, the editor thanked the subscribers at the close of Volume II for the encouragement exceeding expectation "in so Young a Country." He hoped that they would consider that conducting a paper was arduous since it "has for its basis a rough, and difficult road, which is almost insurmountable—*That of pleasing everybody.*" But he said that he had tried to "ever hold the Public Good in his mind's eye," and if he had ever displeased anyone he hoped it would be attributed to "that never failing cause—*Humanem est errare.*" He hoped to make the paper more useful and entertaining, as he had "established a general correspondence with the chief of the Printers throughout the Union," and hoped to receive papers every Monday.

Centinel Advertisements

Starting with only two advertisements in the first issue, the little sheet soon was pressed for advertising space. By early in 1794 more than one page of the four often was devoted entirely to advertising, and advertisements began to appear on page one. Maxwell found it hard to collect from his space users, who likewise used his columns to threaten in turn their non-paying customers. The editor reasoned "that advertisements are the chief support of a Paper, must be obvious to

every man," and announced that those who didn't pay up would be "signalized out in a more pointed manner."

Three kinds of advertisements appeared in large numbers and reflected the conditions in the settlement —one offered rewards for deserters, another advertised for information about stolen goods, and the third consisted of debt notices and collection threats. The primitive community was not without its elements of refinement. One Thomas Goudy offered $8 reward for discovery of the thief who stole such articles as black silk breeches, silk waistcoats, kneebuckles set with purple stones, three pairs of silk stockings, etc.[11]

Another notice offered services of Peter Welsh, "hair dresser and perfumer."[12] One John S. Grant advertised for a lost watch, closing his advertisement with the offer of "TEN DOLLARS REWARD, which is sufficient for an HONEST MAN, and I expect a ROGUE will not deliver her if a larger sum was offered."[13]

The Centinel and Politics

Maxwell was faithful to his avowal of political impartiality to the end. Political discussions, mainly between supporters and critics of territorial officials, were given equal prominence. But Maxwell gave up his weekly before the period of intense political activity, and the later papers are the ones in which political news was uppermost.

The *Centinel* was issued regularly, generally on Saturday of each week, through the three years of its publication. The demands of public office after his appointment as postmaster finally forced Maxwell to give up the press he had carried so far into the wilderness, and in June, 1796, probably with the issue of June 11, he sold the *Centinel* to Edmund Freeman.

Judged by modern standards, this pioneer weekly falls far short of many of the objectives most modern publishers strive for. Maxwell likewise, judged by the same standards, cannot be considered a brilliant editor. But Maxwell's rugged pioneer efforts and the influence and historical value of his paper will be honored increasingly by Ohio journalism.

[11] *Ibid.*, Nov. 23, 1793.
[12] *Ibid.*, April 26, 1794.
[13] *Ibid.*, Nov. 14, 1795.

III

Freeman's Journal

Edmund Freeman, who purchased *The Centinel of the North-Western Territory* in 1796, continued the publication under the title, *Freeman's Journal.* Most writers have hardly afforded Freeman's paper the dignity of separate identity and, while it is true that it was carried on almost unchanged, it supplied a brief but important link in the press history of the pre-state period.

Edmund Freeman

Nothing, apparently, has ever been recorded about the early life of Edmund Freeman, and his pre-Cincinnati life has been a mystery. But the records of Clarence S. Brigham show that Freeman was publisher in Boston of *The Herald of Freedom* from 1788 to 1791.[1] The paper was established September 15, 1788, by Edmund Freeman and Loring Andrews under the title *The Herald of Freedom and the Federal Advertiser.* In 1789 Freeman became sole publisher and continued publication until the issue of April 5, 1791, when the paper passed into the ownership of one John Howel.

Freeman's antecedent experience, therefore, was apparently about that of other western publishers—apprenticeship in the east, publication there for a time, and movement westward with the stream of immigration to the Northwest Territory.

Exactly when Freeman came to Cincinnati, or his pre-publication experience there, if any, is not known. He came west after 1791, and purchased the *Centinel* in 1796.

Freeman continued newspaper publication in Cincinnati without opposition, much as Maxwell had started it. Freeman also apparently took over the general publishing business formerly conducted by the *Centinel* publisher. He became official printer, as Cincinnati

[1] Clarence S. Brigham, "Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society,* XXV, 237.

was still the capital of the Territory, and published the fourth and last volume of the laws in 1798. Two other publications from Freeman's press are known to exist.

Although Freeman's paper was an almost unbroken continuation of the *Centinel*, it was not a slavish copy in either form or content of its predecessor. The paper reflected the new ownership especially in makeup. The page size was enlarged, and the number of columns to the page was increased to four.[2]

Mechanically, *Freeman's Journal* was inferior to the *Centinel*. By 1799 the type was badly worn, resulting in an uneven impression. Inking also was uneven. The paper was of a coarse, porous, inferior quality. Price of the paper was $2.50 a year, "one-half in Advance—The other, at the expiration of the year." Single copy price was "6¼ Cents." Freeman's collection troubles were typical, and his arrangements for accepting produce were similar to those worked out by all the early publishers. He accepted "wheet," "buckwheet," rye, corn, oats, potatoes, turnips, flour, and "cornfed pork," in lieu of cash.

News in the Journal

Foreign news, which appeared under the labels "Foreign Intelligence" or "European Intelligence," was made up almost entirely of war dispatches from the various European battlefronts. That so large a part of the papers was devoted to news of the wars is an indication that in the Territory there was a lively interest in "Buonaparte's expedition."

Local news was given more prominence in *Freeman's Journal* than in the *Centinel*. By 1799 the second stage of territorial government had been attained, and the presence of the first territorial legislature in Cincinnati brought a notable increase in Cincinnati news in the *Journal*. Freeman was the official printer, and apparently he used the device later used by the publisher of the *Scioto Gazette*, and widened his paper columns to correspond to the column width of the legislative journal, thus making one setting of type suffice for both uses.

[2] Extant copies of *Freeman's Journal* are rare, and only two issues are known to exist in Ohio libraries.

Besides the legislative news there were not many local items. Deaths were noted now and then and occasionally a marriage. Indian news had practically disappeared from the paper by this time. The few items of miscellaneous news were generally written with quaint frankness. In telling of the death by drowning of one Daniel Bunnel, the editor observed that while the inquest finding showed death due to accidental causes, the man "had some whiskey on board [his boat], of which, probably he drank too freely, and Being alone fell a victim to his own indiscretion."

Advertising in *Freeman's Journal* reflected the activity of a growing agricultural community. Notices of strayed livestock were numerous, as were legal advertisements resulting from continued trouble encountered by purchasers of the Symmes lands. Pleas for debt payment were still frequent and urgent.

Freeman's advertising rate was more definite than that of some early publishers. He stated that: "Advertisements are received at this office and inserted SIX weeks, at one dollar per square, Cash in hand, if book'd, discontinued after the third week."[3]

Below is quoted an advertisement of a type not infrequently found in these papers and illustrative of the candor and individuality these editors permitted in advertising copy. It read:

> WHEREAS, my wife *SARAH* has committed Adultery —a circumstance I can be quallified to, as I caught her in the *real fact* on the 22d of last month with one *David Morris*. This is therefore to forwarn all persons not to trust or harbour her on my account, as I am determined to pay no debts of her contracting from this date.
>
> ANDREW LOCK.[4]

REMOVAL TO CHILLICOTHE

Freeman had no rival in Cincinnati publishing until May 28, 1799, at which time *The Western Spy* was established there. Early in the next year Freeman discontinued publication in Cincinnati and decided to move his paper to the new town, Chillicothe. He may have been influenced in this decision by the advent of com-

[3] *Freeman's Journal*, Oct. 1, 1799.
[4] *Ibid.*

petition in the Cincinnati field, but more likely because the territorial government, for which he was official printer, was that year moving to Chillicothe, the new capital.

Freeman's publishing activity in Chillicothe was of short duration and until recently its exact nature was obscure. It has been generally considered, and so recorded by Brigham in his "Bibliography of American Newspapers," that no copies of Freeman's Chillicothe paper ever had been preserved. The fact that he published a newspaper there was best established, previous to this time, by an entry in the records of the court of Quarter Sessions of Ross County for 1800, which shows that the court ordered the commissioners in charge of building the new stone courthouse (afterwards used as the first statehouse), to advertise in "Freeman's paper." But since no copies of the paper were known to exist its name and nature, and relationship if any to later Chillicothe newspapers, were matters for speculation.

Wallace H. Cathcart, director of the Western Reserve Historical Society, reported in 1941 that copies of several issues of Freeman's Chillicothe newspaper, overlooked by earlier investigators, were among the extensive collection of early imprints in the Society's library. There are six of these papers and they bear the name *Freeman's Journal and Chillicothe Advertiser*. These issues, the first of which is dated July 11, 1800 (Vol. 1, No. 12) not only give a clear picture of Freeman's post-Cincinnati publishing activity, but they reveal conclusively for the first time evidence upon which an exact founding date of the *Scioto Gazette*, at Chillicothe, can be determined.

The date and numbering of the first of the issues located, July 11, 1800 (Vol. 1, No. 12), would date the beginning of Freeman's Chillicothe *Journal* early in April of the same year, about a year after Freeman suspended publication in Cincinnati. Columns of the paper reveal the details of Freeman's brief and unhappy Chillicothe publishing venture. Plagued by sickness almost from the first, he arranged for disposition of his tiny sheet barely six months after he

started it. Sometime in September, 1800, Freeman sold out to Winship and Willis (Win Winship and Nathaniel Willis) who assumed ownership with the issue of October 10 (Vol. 1, No. 25), and continued publication under the new name *The Scioto Gazette and Chillicothe Advertiser*. Edmund Freeman died just two weeks after the paper changed hands, on October 25, 1800. The death notice appeared in the November 6 issue of the *Scioto Gazette*.

Although *Freeman's Journal* at Chillicothe, fourth newspaper in the Territory in order of founding, was published but briefly, it is important because it was perhaps the first newspaper published in Chillicothe, and because it was the direct antecedent of the more famous *Scioto Gazette*. As additional light is thrown upon the life and publishing activities of Edmund Freeman, a heretofore little known character in Ohio journalism, his pioneering efforts in both Cincinnati and Chillicothe assume increasing importance.

IV

The Western Spy

The third Ohio newspaper of the pre-state period was the *Western Spy, and Hamilton Gazette*, Vol. I, No. 1 of which appeared May 28, 1799. Like the *Centinel* and *Freeman's Journal*, its predecessors in the Territory, the *Spy* was published in Cincinnati. During the summer of 1799 Cincinnati was served by two weeklies, for not until after October 1, 1799, did Freeman move with his *Journal* to Chillicothe.

At the time the *Western Spy* made its appearance Cincinnati's population was about 800, and the town was beginning to show signs of cultural development. It was the capital and the center of territorial official life. This became increasingly active with the assembling of the territorial legislature in Cincinnati in the fall of 1799.

Publishers of the Spy

Although he lived during a later period, and although many copies of his paper survive him, less is known of the founder of the *Spy* than of the Ohio editors who preceded him. The founder and first publisher was Joseph Carpenter, who came to Cincinnati from Massachusetts. One historian says he was "one of the earliest New Englanders to settle at Cincinnati, and a man whose personal popularity contributed largely to such professional success as he managed to win."[1]

Before the close of the *Spy's* first year, Carpenter took as partner in his publishing business Jonathan S. Findlay and the firm name became Carpenter & Findlay.[2] Less has been recorded about Findlay than about Carpenter. He may have been a printer and a worker on the shop staff, or merely a financial partner in the

[1] Reuben Gold Thwaites, *The Ohio Valley Press Before the War of 1812-15*, p. 32.

[2] The new ownership appeared first in the imprint Dec. 10, 1799. Later (August 3, 1803) Findlay's name was taken from the imprint; it became Joseph Carpenter & Co., but Findlay retained an interest in the paper. By 1805 Carpenter was again sole owner. (See Brigham, *loc. cit.*, XXIX, p. 147.)

publishing enterprise. Carpenter & Findlay did general printing, along with publication of their weekly, and more early Ohio imprints are credited to them than to any of the other publishers of the period except Nathaniel Willis. Carpenter apparently obtained the government printing contract formerly held by Freeman, for *Territorial Laws*, and the journal of the legislature, both printed by Carpenter & Findlay, appeared in 1800 and 1801. Other imprints credited to Carpenter & Findlay, or to Carpenter alone, are:

An Oration Delivered to the Masonic Society in Cincinnati on the Anniversary of St. John, the Evangelist. 1799.

The Military Law. 1800.

The Urim or Halcyon Cabala. 1801.

Land Laws. 1801.

The Voice of the Midnight Cry. 1801.

A Reply to the Statement of John Cleves Symmes, Addressed to a Committee of Congress, Jan. 30, 1882. 1805?

Stubbs, Robert, *An Oration Delivered to the Masonic Society at Cincinnati.* 1805.

The Ohio Almanac, for the Year of Our Lord, 1806. 1805.[3]

The last named publication, the *Ohio Almanac*, which was started by Carpenter, became one of the most popular almanacs of the period and is especially valuable for its historical records, particularly as to the development of religious organizations and public improvements.[4]

After seven years of publication of the *Spy*, a period described by Reuben Gold Thwaites as one "in which prosperity freely alternated with financial difficulties," Carpenter sold his paper in 1806 to David Carney who changed the name to the *Whig*. Four years later Carpenter re-entered publishing and revived the *Spy*.

At the beginning of the War of 1812 Carpenter enlisted in the volunteer militia and attained the rank of captain, serving under General William Henry Harrison. He died in service two years later from exposure suffered on a forced march from Ft. St. Mary's, and was buried in Cincinnati with military honors.

[3] *Ohio Imprints*, pp. 13-27.
[4] Bond, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

The *Western Spy*, physically, was a creditable job of printing. It was much improved over *Freeman's Journal*. Carpenter in the first issue promised his prospective subscribers that the *Spy* would be well printed with "an handsome type," and his promise was kept. He had some fine new types, especially a beautiful font of italic.[5]

The Ohio papers gradually were being increased in size—the *Spy* was a four-page sheet, four columns to the page, each page 11 by 18 inches. Columns were separated by heavy rules. Inking was good, impression was even, and in all it was above the average in appearance of the territorial papers. The paper was of better quality than that used by Freeman, but was not equal to the first handmade paper used in the *Centinel*.

Carpenter's opening statement to the public was an interesting commentary on the difficulties of early publishing in the west, and also reflected the growing political feeling in the Territory. He professed little sympathy with political journalism and determined to "be strictly impartial." The notice follows in part:

> It would be needless in him [the editor] to expatiate on the usefulness of a well conducted and impartial Newspaper to the enlightened citizens of this country, and the public are equally sensible of the disadvantages of a Newspaper devoted entirely to party spirit, however improper it may be, it is believed that nearly three-fourths of the Printers in the United States (since party spirit has unfortunately become very prevalent) have attached themselves to the one party or the other, and their papers have been devoted to justifying their own and ridiculing the other; and their opponents would [—?] get liberty to say a single sylable in justification of their opinions though ever so just —thus the grand object which makes a Newspaper valuable and useful to society, is entirely destroyed and deprives a part of the community of privileges to which they are all equally entitled: He is therefore determined as far as his abilities will enable him, to be strictly impartial. The PRESS shall be open to all communications if the language

[5] A practically complete file of the *Spy* is owned by the Ohio Philosophical and Historical Society, Cincinnati, including Vol. I, No. 1.

is not scurrilous or personal; such will always [be] studiously avoided.

The editor was fairly successful in his desire to publish an "interesting and intelligent paper," and in a number of respects it showed improvement over its predecessors in the Territory.

In the *Spy* appeared the first attempt noted in these papers of the use of summarizing headlines. The paper had a "late news" column labeled "Postscript" in which articles were summarized in head types similar to the following:

FRENCH REPUBLIC
Council of Five Hundred
March 13.
Declaration of War,
against the
Emperor of Germany and the
Grand Duke of Tuscany.[6]

Carpenter also used clever tricks of makeup, such as tabulating non-resident land holders in columns the long way of the page.

Advertising in the paper reflected a cultural advance in the little settlement. In the Dec. 5, 1801, issue appeared an advertisement of the "Cincinnati Theater" announcing a performance of "She Stoops to Conquer." The customers were warned that "The doors will be opened at half after 5, and the performance commence at half after 6 precisely." The first school for young ladies advertised in 1802, offering reading taught for 250 cents a quarter, reading and sewing for $3, reading, writing, and sewing for 50 cents additional. In this year the first town library was reported formed.[7]

Display advertising appeared first in Ohio in the *Spy*. Accompanying a for-rent advertisement in the May 28, 1799 issue was a small outline cut of a house, about an inch square. Tricks were used occasionally to draw attention to advertising columns, such as inverting an advertisement and pointing a hand toward it with the words "Look There." The number of runaway slave advertisements increased in the *Spy* and one such

[6] *Western Spy*, May 28, 1799.
[7] Thwaites, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

was inserted by Andrew Jackson of Tennessee who offered $50 reward for the fugitive's return.

The Spy and Public Issues

Carpenter strove through the tumultuous pre-statehood days to live up to his promise of political impartiality. He revealed only a slight Federalist bias during the pre-convention days when Cincinnati, opposed to the ambitions of the Ross county faction, was pro-Democratic-Republican.

Letters to the editor became numerous after 1800. The editor had announced that "articles of intelligence" would be "thankfully received," and his readers were generous in response. A majority of correspondents were in favor of state government and some were critical of the "almost supreme power vested in our executive." Suggestions for candidates to the approaching statehood convention, became so numerous that the editor started the publication of a whole column labeled "Tickets," containing suggested slates of candidates.

Federalist sentiment was not lacking in the *Spy*. One writer declared that the project for statehood was started by congressmen who owned land near Chillicothe and desired a state capital there to increase the land's value. A series of five articles signed by "Frank Stubblefield" appeared in 1802 against statehood.

Slavery was an issue strongly opposed in the *Spy*. Its contributors of both parties were against slavery being admitted into the proposed state. Charges were made by correspondents that the Virginia faction was anxious to open the state to slavery, and Hamilton county residents argued that a vote for a delegate from Ross County would be a vote for slavery. In all this debate the editor remained discreetly in the background. He was careful not to advance an opinion, and at no time revealed his sentiments by his own statements regarding these live political issues.

Carpenter was an enterprising news gatherer and "scooped" the west with an account of the death of Washington in his January 7, 1800, issue. The account, filling a column and a half, inside black borders on page three, began:

MOURN! COLUMBIA! MOURN

Your Father, your Protector, is gone!!

We have the painful task of announcing the death of the most illustrious man that ever made his exit from this stage of mortality—

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON.

For several issues the paper gave much space to the president's death and subsequent events. Two weeks after the death notice the *Spy* carried an account of plans for Cincinnati's tribute to the first president. The entire front page of the February 12, 1800, issue was given over to the text of the funeral oration delivered by Major General Henry Lee.

Local news continued to be scanty in the *Spy* as in its predecessors. The only local items in Vol. I, No. 1 were an account of some Indian trouble thought brewing, a marriage announcement (headed "Hymeneal"), and a brief account of an Ohio river drowning. On one occasion the paper reported the Fourth of July celebration at near-by Columbia but did not mention the festivities at Cincinnati. In the following issue (July 16, 1800) the "toasts" proposed at the Cincinnati celebration were published with the statement that they had been "handed us" too late for previous issue.

The *Spy* gave good coverage to legislative deliberations, even though the territorial government had been moved to Chillicothe.

The statehood convention was reported in the *Spy* beginning with the November 10, 1802, issue and the next week extracts from the journal appeared. In the December 8, 1802, issue was General St. Clair's swansong, a signed letter in which he revealed he would not run for governor (which he knew would be futile) and which showed him to be a tired and somewhat bitter old man.

In the same issue, occupying all of page one and half of the next page, appeared the "Constitution of the State of Ohio." In the issue of March 16, 1803, the first news of the first Ohio General Assembly was printed and in the *Spy's* statement of ownership at the bottom of page one appeared for the first time in an Ohio newspaper the words "State of Ohio."

V

The Scioto Gazette

It was seven years after William Maxwell set up his primitive press in Cincinnati in 1793 and started publication of the first newspaper in Ohio that the *Scioto Gazette* was founded in another backwoods settlement, Chillicothe. While the *Gazette* is not the oldest newspaper in the state, it has several claims to distinction not enjoyed by its predecessors or early contemporaries.

Mortality among these pioneer papers was high but the *Gazette* was successfully guided past the many pitfalls which beset the frontier publisher, to which many of its early rivals succumbed. The *Gazette* alone, among these earliest papers, still exists, and its long and unbroken span of life has established for it an enviable record for continuous publication. It is not only the oldest newspaper in Ohio published continuously under the same name, but it is the oldest existing paper in the region north and west of the Ohio river, and is one of the oldest newspapers of continuous publication in the entire country.

Located as it was in the territorial capital during the critical pre-statehood years, and later in the first state capital, the *Scioto Gazette* was in a position to assume leadership which was denied many of its contemporaries less strategically situated.

Nathaniel Willis

Nathaniel Willis, founder of the *Scioto Gazette,* was first of a famous family to win recognition in the New World, and was the patriarch of future Willis generations which were to figure prominently in American journalism. He was the first of three Nathaniel Willises, all of whom devoted their lives to newspaper or magazine publication. Nathaniel, the son, founder of *Youth's Companion,* and Nathaniel Parker Willis, the grandson, both rose to high places in the literary and publishing world.

Little is known of the early life of the first Nathaniel Willis. While he devoted his life to editing and publishing, there remains little in print, other than the existing copies of his publications, to throw light upon this early period of his life. It is strange that though he was first in a long line of literary folks, none of his descendants attempted a biography of their enterprising ancestor. Willis biographers have concentrated their efforts on his descendants, whose acclaim was greater and whose achievements were more recent.

Nathaniel Willis, senior, was born February 7, 1755, in Boston, the fifth in descent from George Willis who emigrated to America from England in 1630. He presumably was apprenticed early to a printer because by the time of the outbreak of the Revolution he was a recognized printer in Boston. It is traditionally believed that he learned the printer's art under Benjamin Franklin, and he is said to have operated a printing and publishing business from the same building in which Franklin had his shop. Both seem to be more legend than established fact.

At an early age he showed the enterprise which carried him to the frontier, for at 21 he began publishing his first newspaper, the *Independent Chronicle,* at Boston. This first publishing venture was started on the eve of the Revolution, which young Willis ardently supported both by his press, which one biographer describes as a "militant" organ, and by other service. He participated in the "Boston Tea Party" and served in the war as an adjutant of a regiment under General John Sullivan. After publishing the *Independent Chronicle* for eight years, Willis sold the paper in 1784 and joined the westward movement.

Willis' Pre-Chillicothe Papers

The *Independent Chronicle,* the pioneer Willis' first newspaper undertaking, was not strictly a new one in Boston since it was the continuation, under a new name and ownership, of the *New England Chronicle* which Willis had purchased in 1776 from Samuel Hall. Willis continued publication of the *Chronicle* until 1784, when, with the issue of January 1, he sold the

paper and cast his lot with the pioneers who by this time were streaming into the back country of Pennsylvania and Virginia. Willis was a seasoned publisher of 29 when he started westward, stopping first in the Virginia Piedmont.

Arriving in Virginia, Willis located in the then western town of Winchester and established there his second newspaper in March, 1790. He called it *Willis's Virginia Gazette,* adding his own name to the title to distinguish his paper from already existing "Virginia Gazettes," of which there were several, one other in the same town. Not averse to long titles he later added "Winchester Advertiser" and the paper became *Willis's Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser.* Willis published his Winchester paper only part of that year (1790) and in the fall moved, with his paper, farther west into what is now West Virginia.

This change brought Nathaniel Willis to Shepherdstown, "where he became the first printer in the future state of West Virginia."[1] This Shepherdstown paper he called the *Potowmac Guardian, and Berkeley Advertiser* and the first issue appeared presumably in November, 1790. As in Winchester, Willis' stay in Shepherdstown was brief. About a year after the paper was started the publisher made his third move westward, this time to Martinsburg, then in western Virginia. His Martinsburg newspaper was a continuation, without change of name or volume numbering, of the paper published at Shepherdstown as late as November, 1791.

Willis established himself more permanently in Martinsburg, and his *Guardian* was published from that place for at least seven years. This residence and paper were Willis' last before his going to Chillicothe, and from surviving copies of the paper come the most reliable clues to the exact time of the *Scioto Gazette* founder's arrival in Ohio. The paper was continued until the fall of 1799. Willis then sold out to one Armstrong Charlton and prepared for the Ohio journey and what was to prove to be, historically, his most significant achievement.

[1] Douglas C. McMurtrie, *A History of Printing in the United States,* p. 303.

Founding of The Scioto Gazette

There has been general disagreement among historians over the date the *Scioto Gazette* was launched in Chillicothe. Most early writers and many later investigators have relied upon various theories and some inexact evidence to credit Willis' paper with an earlier start than the 1800 date which is now established.[2] The claim that Willis started the *Scioto Gazette* in 1796 was supported as early as 1856 by an article in *Harpers Magazine* and later by the *Scioto Gazette* of September 19, 1867.[3] This misconception has been perpetuated generally by writers to the present. Richard Storrs Willis, grandson of the publisher, supported this idea, and to justify his contention some writers have advanced the theory that Willis began a paper in 1796, or shortly afterward, later discontinued publication for some unknown reason, and began again in 1800 with a new volume and numbering.

That Nathaniel Willis could not have established himself at Chillicothe before late in the winter of 1799 at the earliest is now fairly conclusive. From existing copies of the *Potomak Guardian,* to which the name had been changed February 1, 1798, Willis' last publishing venture in Virginia, we learn that at least as late as October 30, 1799, Willis was still publishing the Martinsburg paper. The last issue of the *Guardian* located, that of January 8, 1800, was then published by Charlton, to whom Willis had sold out during the preceding two months. In this issue, which is in the newspaper collection of the Boston Public Library, appears an advertisement inserted by N. Willis, under date of December 4, 1799, in which he stated that he planned to leave Martinsburg in the spring.

While no information has yet come to light to prove definitely the exact date Willis came to Chillicothe, in-

[2] Osman Castle Hooper, whose *History of Ohio Journalism* appeared as late as 1933, supports the theory that Willis arrived in Chillicothe in 1796 or 1797, and that his *Gazette* was founded at that early date (pp. 18-19). See also S. S. Knabenshue, "The Press of Ohio," in *Complete Proceedings of the Ohio Centennial,* p. 566; *Scioto Gazette,* May 21, 1903, p. 17; Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States,* p. 196.

[3] Knabenshue, *loc. cit.,* p. 566.

formation contained in early issues of *Freeman's Journal and Chillicothe Advertiser,* published in Chillicothe in 1800 by Edmund Freeman, establishes conclusively the facts relating to the *Scioto Gazette's* beginning under Nathaniel Willis, facts which for so long have been the subject of disagreement and speculation.

Instead of establishing a new newspaper and the first newspaper in Chillicothe, as has been popularly believed, it is revealed that Willis merely continued under the new name "Scioto Gazette," without change of volume or issue numbering, the paper started in Chillicothe earlier in 1800 by Freeman. This change of ownership occurred with the issue of October 10, 1800 (Vol. 1, No. 25), although actual sale of *Freeman's Journal and Chillicothe Advertiser* to Nathaniel Willis (and Win Winship, co-owner for the first year) took place in September.

If the *Scioto Gazette* were to be traced through its lineal antecedent, *Freeman's Journal and Chillicothe Advertiser,* to the first issue of that paper, its beginning would be dated April 25, 1800. But Willis' ownership and the "Scioto Gazette" title both were started October 10, 1800, and that date seems the logical one for the founding of the *Gazette.* The *Scioto Gazette,* as such, never had a Vol. 1, No. 1.

The findings of R. M. Stimson, librarian in 1900 of Marietta College, who at some earlier time attempted to trace the origin of the *Scioto Gazette,* were not aimed so much at proving that Willis' ownership began as early as 1796, but he did insist that a "Scioto Gazette" existed in Chillicothe earlier than 1800. Writing for the Centennial issue of the *Gazette* he said:

> Old manuscripts kept in the Hoddy family, one of the earliest in the Scioto valley, state that in 1797 the *Scioto Gazette* at Chilicote was begun by a man named Joseph Carpenter, who brought his material by pack train and boat from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The first issue, so says the Hoddy manuscript, was in September, 1797. Mrs. N. Beanick, living near Marietta in the 1860's, had in her possession one of the first copies of the paper, dated 1797. Carpenter sold out to

> Nathaniel Willis in 1799. William Harrison, son of General Bental Harrison, near Marietta, had a file of the *Gazette*, "Willis' paper," from December, 1799. . . . It appears by all accounts that the paper was started before 1800. If it was, it is probable that it was discontinued for a time, or that Mr. Willis began anew both volume and number with the coming of 1800.[4]

This raises the question whether a paper, perhaps one with the name "Scioto Gazette," was published for a time in Chillicothe even before Freeman began his *Journal* there. If such a paper existed, it is reasonable to suppose that Joseph Carpenter (referred to above) was the man who first published it, for his *Western Spy* at Cincinnati was not established until the spring of 1799.[5]

We still cannot say with certainty what the first newspaper in Chillicothe was called and who published it. It probably was *Freeman's Journal and Chillicothe Advertiser*. If some of the first twelve issues of this paper, now unreported in any library, turn up, this fact too may be conclusively established. But it is now definite that the *Scioto Gazette* under Willis was not the first paper to be published in Chillicothe, and it is equally well established that Willis' Chillicothe publishing career actually began on October 10, 1800, with Vol. 1, No. 25 of the weekly begun the preceding April by Edmund Freeman.

During the first year after the sale by Freeman the paper was published by Winship and Willis under the title *The Scioto Gazette and Chillicothe Advertiser*. In January, 1801, the title was shortened to *The Scioto Gazette*, and on April 21 of the same year Willis became sole owner.[6]

[4] *Scioto Gazette*, April 28 ,1900, cited by Hooper, *op. cit.* p. 19.

[5] If Carpenter did publish the first Chillicothe paper he may have called it "Scioto Gazette" and Willis may have revived the name when he took over *Freeman's Journal and Chillicothe Advertiser*.

[6] The names of Winship & Willis, and Nathaniel Willis, appear in many early Ohio imprints. They are listed in *Ohio Imprints, 1796-1805*, pp. 15-27. Winship came from Shepherdstown, Va., to Chillicothe.

The first settlers to Chillicothe, led by the town's founder, Nathaniel Massie, came to the fertile banks of the Scioto near the mouth of Paint Creek on April 1, 1796. The fact that it was only four years between the time the first tree was felled to lay out the first street and the time Willis became the owner and editor of the *Gazette,* shows both how fast the primitive village grew, and how close the pioneer printer-journalist kept to the wedge of the advancing frontier.

Willis' first publishing office was a one-story log cabin, an annex to a large two-story log building which stood on the west side of Paint Street just south of the cross alley between Second and Water Streets. A little later it was moved to another log building on the southwest corner of Paint and Water Streets.

Willis added to his equipment by purchase of Freeman's plant, and he also bought some new types when he began his Chillicothe publishing business. The quality of the product, from a mechanical standpoint was uniform and fairly good. The impression was good and inking even; type was not badly worn. It is said that the *Gazette* during this early period enjoyed a "wide circulation."

Like most of its contemporaries the *Gazette* was a small sheet of four pages, each page measuring 11½ by 18 inches. Body type was what would now be considered about 8- to 10-point in size, and retained the characteristic old-style elements, including the old style "s."

Many articles were long and paragraphing was almost an undiscovered art. One issue carried a page-one article by one William Mathers, pleading for united action to build a great commercial empire in the Northwest Territory. This occupied the entire page and in it there was not a single paragraph.

Because Willis was printer to the legislature, and printed the laws in the paper before he did them in book form, he increased the width of some of the paper's columns to conform to the prospective book page, as Freeman had done in the *Journal,* so that one setting of type would suffice.

Contents of the Gazette

The amount of local news in the *Scioto Gazette* was rather meager, but was of greater quantity than that carried by the three earlier papers. Page one political news was generally strongly pro-Jeffersonian. The little local news appeared under a reprint of the nameplate on page three, under which was printed daily the paper's motto:

> Here shall the Press the people's rights maintain
> Unaw'd by influence and unbrib'd by gain;
> Here patriot truth it's glorious precepts draw,
> Pledg'd to *Religion*, *Liberty* and *Law*.[7]

Willis, like most early editors, disregarded most local events unless they had some bearing upon the political or economic situation. One early *Gazette* item mentioned that a murder had been committed in a remote part of the county, that the two murderers were in the local jail, but their names had not been learned nor details of the crime. The editor said he thought that the deed had been committed with a club.

Most of these early local items in the *Gazette* were not written from an entirely detached point of view or with much regard for objectivity. They were often hybrids—part news, part editorial—with the two often so interwoven that strict classification would be impossible.

Letters to the editor were not only numerous, but were played up prominently in the paper. If one is to judge by the lively contents of many of them, and witty and pungent writing contained in some, they must have been near the top in reader interest. The *Gazette* letters were generally on some phase of the lively political controversy which held the attention of this frontier community. The writers, who usually remained discreetly anonymous behind an appropriate pseudonym, frequently became vitriolic, and the editor seemed not averse to publishing their libelous compositions. One, in answer to "A Citizen" who "has taken up his gander's quill" to instruct in voting Federalist, closed with this sentence:

[7] The lines, quoted from Joseph Story, are inaccurate.—Ed.

> But for God's sake, if you have any regard for your own reputation, the reputation of the press, and the reputation of the country you live in, you will stop where you are. And that you may no longer trouble us with your nonsense, and for the future attend to your own business, is the fervent wish of an
>
> Old Farmer & Plain Settler.[8]

Numerous short items—the forerunners of modern "fillers"—frequently dealt with some phase of medicine or pseudo-science. One early health item seems incredible in the light of modern health knowledge. It was headed *"Nothing Created in Vain.* Kill Not One Fly."

> Flies are among our best friends at this season of the year. A living fly purifies the atmosphere, by destroying the putrefaction; but a dead one generates nourishing food for them; and instead of darkening our rooms to drive them out, open our windows and invite them in. Give them plenty to eat on the sideboard, and they will not infest us at table. Furnish them with plenty of paper-network to lodge in, and they will never spoil your furniture.[9]

Editorials did not appear regularly, but in editorial writing and in the number of editorials used, Willis showed quite an advance over earlier Ohio journalists. Subjects of editorials were political, and mirrored the obvious Democrat sentiments of the editor and those of a majority of his readers. Willis wrote rather well. He had a sense of humor and livened his political discourses with satire and irony. He did not rant and seldom showed the tendency to verbosity displayed by some of his successors.

Advertisements in the *Gazette* followed the usual pattern. Many asked for information about strayed animals, offering $2 to $3 reward. Announcements of commodities such as dry groceries and spun goods began to appear more frequently. Advertisements for the return of runaway slaves appeared regularly after 1800.

[8] *Scioto Gazette*, July 3, 1802.
[9] *Ibid.*, August 28, 1802.

The *Scioto Gazette* was Democratic-Republican from the first. Willis, who had been reared in the eastern stronghold of Federalism, joined in the freedom-loving spirit of the frontier and, either from conviction or expediency, threw his support to the Jeffersonians. The Willis political leanings likely were well founded because the son, Nathaniel, also became an anti-Federalist editor.

Chillicothe was a Democratic stronghold in the Ohio country and its leading citizens became the leaders of the party in Ohio. Settled largely by emigrants from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and from Kentucky, this Chillicothe clique—dubbed "the Virginia Junta" by St. Clair—led in the fight against the Federalist governor, and the *Gazette* became their mouthpiece. Beverley W. Bond says that the *Gazette* assumed political leadership early, "and after 1804 it was the official organ of the Republican party in Ohio."[10]

The *Gazette* was decidedly cool to the Federalist governor, choosing to ignore rather than fight him.

His obvious bias notwithstanding, Willis was usually generous in printing both sides of the political controversy. The Federalist supporters, while a minority, were vociferous, and the *Gazette* gave space for their heated letters along with Democratic contributions. They served as useful targets upon which the opposition quill-wielders aimed their ink missiles. Most of the *Gazette's* more formal political writing was done by special contributors whose identity was disguised by elaborate pseudonyms such as "Amicus Libertatis."

Willis' policy of opening his pages to all parties found generous expression in his publication of a series of strongly pro-Federalist articles written by the young Federalist lawyer, Charles Hammond, whose writings have been characterized as "the most spirited attempts in the support of his (St. Clair's) cause."[11]

The *Gazette* strongly supported the statehood move-

[10] Bond, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

[11] Francis Phelps Weisenburger, *A Life of Charles Hammond*, p. 8, quoting Jacob Burnet, *Notes on the Early Settlement of the Northwest Territory*, pp. 380-381.

ment and during 1802 the paper was dominated by the statehood struggle. As the elections neared for representatives to the Constitutional Convention, called for November 1 at Chillicothe, "foreign" news was almost completely crowded out, and by October, 1802, the whole paper was given over to communications concerning the coming convention. The delegates convened at Chillicothe November 1, 1802, and in the next *Gazette* issue (November 6) Willis began publishing convention proceedings—"Extract from the Journal" —in double-width columns.

He lost no time in proudly displaying the new "Ohio" in his date-line. The state constitution was unanimously adopted by the convention November 29, 1802, and, although Ohio was not yet officially a member of the Union, the regular issue of the *Gazette* appeared the following day with "State of Ohio" substituted in the dateline for "North-western Territory."

After successfully launching the *Scioto Gazette* in Chillicothe, Nathaniel Willis did not remain long as its publisher. With the issue of December 26, 1805, he sold the *Gazette* to Joseph S. Collins and Co.[12]

The cause of his retirement at the comparatively early age of 50 is not apparent. Although his newspaper ventures had all been successful, it is doubtful, considering the limited income available to the frontier press, that he had attained a state of financial independence.

Of Willis' fifty years, thirty-one had been spent in newspaper production, mostly under the severe conditions of the frontier. He had been the publisher of five newspapers, three of which he founded, and had earned the distinction of being the first publisher in what was to become the state of West Virginia. Of his greatest distinction he was never aware—founder of the oldest surviving newspaper in the Northwest.

He retired to a farm near Chillicothe and opened a

[12] The new owner's name appears in the paper for the first time December 26, 1805. Both Hooper, *op. cit.*, p. 20, and G. W. C. Perry, "The Scioto Gazette, Oldest Newspaper in Ohio," in the *Ohio Magazine*, II, (April, 1907), p. 304, say Willis continued as publisher until 1807, but the issue quoted verifies the earlier date.

tavern. One writer says that this was "no descent from editorial dignity," for it is stated in an early *Gazette* that no less a person than General Joseph Kerr, once United States senator from Ohio, kept tavern at the sign of the "Scioto Ox" in Chillicothe.[13] Willis spent the remaining twenty-six years of his life on his farm, dying April 1, 1831, aged 76.

[13] Perry, *loc. cit.*, p. 304.

VI

The Ohio Gazette

Why Marietta, the oldest community in the Northwest Territory, was without a newspaper for thirteen years is a question for interesting conjecture.[1] This settlement, founded in 1788, was by far the most cultured of any in the early northwest yet did not have a newspaper until 1801.

It may have been that some other western paper circulated in Marietta and took the place somewhat of a purely local sheet. The *Pittsburgh Gazette* circulated over a rather wide area and it may be that this paper got into Marietta before it was much out of date.[2] It is hard to believe that the New England families who came to Marietta would have been content without a newspaper, when, as one writer has said, they desired "to keep in the very front line as regards education and dissemination of intelligence and information."

First settlers to the Marietta community arrived at Ft. Harmar at the mouth of the Muskingum river April 7, 1786. They laid out the town on the east bank of that river under supervision of Rufus Putnam, "father of the Ohio Company." The stockade which the founders built was 180 feet square, with a blockhouse at each corner. It provided dwellings for forty or fifty families and had a place for court and for worship. The office of the town's first paper was located there later. Because of this efficient protection, Marietta passed through four years of Indian warfare with little loss of life.

[1] Marietta may have had a printing establishment before it had a newspaper. S. P. Hildreth, *Pioneer History*, p. 219, quotes from "A law for fixing terms of general court," which he says was published at Marietta Aug. 30, 1788 (citing Chase's *Statutes of Ohio*).

[2] In 1796 several freight-boat lines advertised that they made prompt delivery of the *Gazette* to Pennsylvania subscribers who lived on tributaries of the Ohio. This service may have made connections downstream with similar lines connecting with Marietta. (Thwaites, *op. cit.*, p. 6.)

Washington County, in which Marietta is located, was the first to be formed in the Territory. Marietta was the first town to be incorporated, in 1800.[3]

These settlers in the first settlement in the Territory were of sharp contrast, in culture and refinement, to the rough backwoodsmen who populated some of the other settlements, especially Cincinnati. Some were Harvard and Yale men. The leaders had been officers in the Revolution, and a number were Masons. This was a community governed by law and order, and motivated by religious and educational idealism.

Major Denny, stationed at Ft. Harmar, wrote in his diary in 1788 the following evaluation of these first Marietta residents:

> These people appear the most happy folks in the world, greatly satisfied with their new purchase. They certainly are the best informed, most curteous and civil strangers of any I have yet met with. The order and regularity observed by all, their sober deportment, and perfect submission to the constituted authorities, must tend much to promote their settlements.[4]

These pioneers from the New England states were predominantly Federalist in their sentiments. The Ohio Company proposition for land purchase was finally manipulated through the Continental Congress by the Company's support of St. Clair, president of Congress, for Territorial governor.

Into this community of culture and learning a newspaper finally made its tardy appearance in 1801. It was the *Ohio Gazette, and the Territorial and Virginia Herald*. This Marietta paper was the sixth and last newspaper to be established in the Ohio country before the state was formed.

Backus and Silliman

Founders of the *Ohio Gazette* were Elijah Backus and Wyllys Silliman, both natives of Connecticut, both lawyers, and both influential in Marietta and in early Ohio. They were a contrast to the rugged editors of the

[3] I. W. Andrews, *Washington County and the Early Settlement of Ohio*, p. 31. Athens was second, Cincinnati third, and Chillicothe fourth.

[4] Rufus King, *Ohio, First Fruits of the Ordinance of 1787*, pp. 199-200.

other territorial papers who had acquired what editing skill they possessed by rule-of-thumb methods rather than from formal education.

Backus was a Yale graduate in the class of 1777. He was admitted to the bar in 1800 in Connecticut, and shortly afterward came to Marietta and engaged in law practice. Silliman was his law partner. In 1803 Backus was a member of the first Ohio Senate. He was the owner of Blennerhassett Island and sold it to Aaron Burr.

Backus moved from Ohio shortly after severing connection with the paper and the date and place of his death are disputed.[5]

Wyllys Silliman was born in 1777 in Stratford, Conn., and began his newspaper activity in West Virginia, where it has been said he edited a Federalist paper.[6] He went to Marietta prior to the establishment of the *Gazette* and was engaged in law practice with Backus before the joint publishing venture was undertaken. Silliman, too, was a member of the first Ohio legislature. He subsequently held many responsible public offices at Marietta and at Zanesville, to which he moved when appointed register of the land office by President Jefferson.

In 1825 Silliman was a candidate against William Henry Harrison and Thomas Worthington for the United States Senate, and was defeated by Harrison by a narrow margin. After an active life, first as publisher-lawyer and then as public official and politician, he died in Zanesville in 1842.

The *Ohio Gazette* was first published December 18, 1801, according to the earliest issue located, that of January 1, 1802, Vol. I, No. 3.[7] While Elijah Backus did most of the editing his name did not appear in the imprint.

[5] M. R. Andrews (*History of Marietta*, II, 399) states he died in Pittsburgh in 1807 or 1808. In *History of Washington County*, p. 117, the place is given as Ruskin, Ill., in 1812.

[6] Anon., *History of Muskingum County*, p. 67. Brigham does not list his name as appearing in a West Virginia imprint.

[7] Few copies of this paper are extant. No Ohio library has a copy for the period 1801-1803. The earliest known copy in Ohio, an issue of Sept. 18, 1806, is in the Western Reserve Historical Society library. The American Antiquarian Society has eleven issues of 1802.

The ponderous title under which the paper appeared —The *Ohio Gazette, and the Territorial and Virginia Herald*—was used with design. A settlement was forming across the river at what is now Parkersburg, W. Va., and the publishers added the "Virginia Herald" to entice readers from this settlement.

Content and Style

The *Gazette*, printed on a wooden Ramage press with stone bed, was a paper of four pages, each 11 by 18 inches, with four columns to the page. Above the nameplate was an illustration of a bald eagle. It appeared weekly and the subscription price was the customary $2.50 a year.

As one would expect, the lawyer-editors of the *Ohio Gazette* employed a stilted style of writing characteristic of educated persons of the time. One writer comments upon this characteristic of the paper as follows:

> Writing [in the *Gazette*] . . . bore a different appearance from that we are now accustomed to follow. It had in it a dignity and grace which would seem to befit the powdered wig, the ruffled shirt, the knee breeches, and the buckled shoes. The editor seemed by his expressions to be in court attire with a lexicon of polished phrases and "Chesterfield's letters" at his elbow.[8]

In politics the *Gazette* was Jeffersonian, which was unusual in view of the fact that Marietta was the Federalist stronghold of the Territory. It was politically out-of-step with the community and this fact may have accounted for the indifferent success won by the paper during early years of its publication. Later Federalist papers got better support from the community. Credit must be given to the *Ohio Gazette* for its staunch support of the statehood movement in a community in which much hostility to the proposal existed.

Within two years after the paper started, Silliman was appointed to the lucrative government post at Zanesville and sold his interest in the *Gazette* to Backus. The latter soon sold the paper to Fairlamb and Gates, and in 1805 Samuel Fairlamb became sole publisher. The last issue located is that of December 9,

[8] Andrews, *op. cit., II*, p. 399.

1811. During this period the paper was published irregularly. In 1810 it was sold at sheriff's sale, and Fairlamb died in the poorhouse. This paper, located in the cultural center of the Ohio country of the time, was of less influence in its day and today is of less historical significance than any of its predecessors in Ohio.

Conclusion

Of the six Ohio newspapers of the territorial period, only one, the *Scioto Gazette,* exists today. This Chillicothe paper was published for 140 years under the original title. In January, 1940, the "Scioto" was taken from the nameplate and the paper is published today as the Chillicothe *Gazette.* Each of the other five papers suffered one of several fates common to so many pioneer journals.

All of these newspapers played important parts in the movement for statehood by pooling public thought and welding together the population, crystallizing their aims, and strengthening their ambitions. But the *Scioto Gazette* was the influential organ during this significant period in Ohio's early history. The *Gazette* was in the center of things, at the hub of Ohio's political life, located as it was in the last territorial and first state capital.

Nathaniel Willis guided the destinies of the *Scioto Gazette* during the paper's day of golden opportunity for significant service and during Chillicothe's heyday. The founders of the young capital cherished for it the place of future metropolis of the new state and, during the first years of *Gazette* history, Chillicothe appeared headed toward a realization of that dream. But with the removal of the seat of state government to Zanesville in 1810, the streams of greatest progress flowed around Chillicothe, and it became stabilized as a prosperous country town. The *Gazette,* however, remained strong and successful through the years and today is an influential county-seat daily.

These six pre-state newspapers, crude by comparison with modern Ohio journals, laid the groundwork for an Ohio newspaper press which today ranks fourth

in the nation.[13] They were in every sense of the word pioneers like their founders and were part and parcel of the pioneer movement in Ohio.

As the 1943 sesquicentennial anniversary of the establishment of the newspaper in Ohio nears, the contribution of these first weeklies to the life of their time and their worth as valuable historical sources become increasingly apparent.

[13] In number of daily newspapers and in daily circulation.